

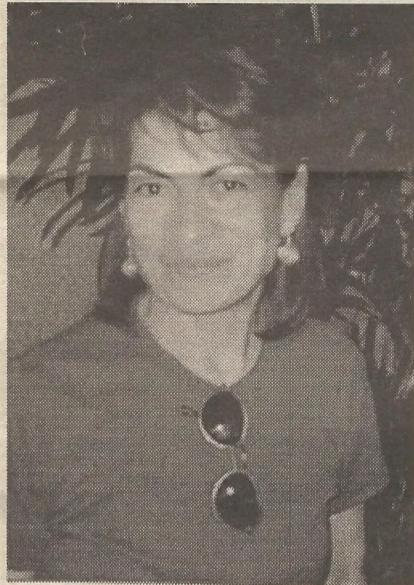
FREEDOM!!!!!!

OUT OF TIME

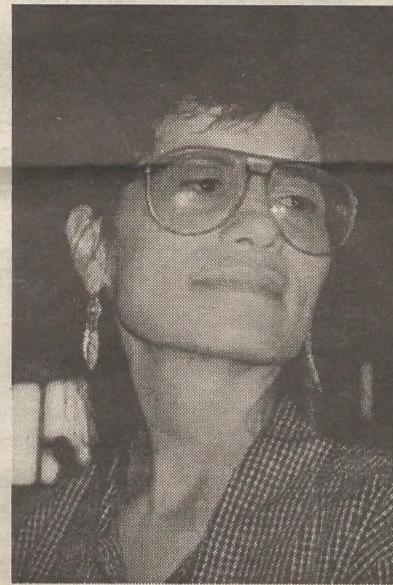
Issue No. 49

Out of Control--Lesbian Committee to Support Women Political Prisoners

Sept 1999



Alicia Rodriguez at SFO Airport



Lucy Rodriguez at
SFO Airport



Dylcia Pagan After Her Release

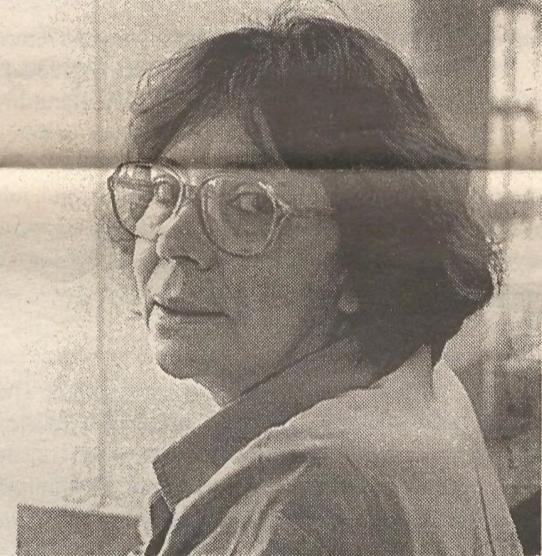


Supporters Welcome Carmen Valentin and Denise Alvarado

I always knew that I was Puerto Rican...

by Denise Alvarado

...But here on the West Coast there isn't a real community of my people, such as in New York and Chicago. I've spent many years trying to find others like myself, Puerto Ricans born in the United States, and during this search, 4 years ago at an event commemorating "El Grito de Lares", an uprising against Spanish rule on the island back in 1868, I saw a table full of information about 15 Puerto Rican political prisoners. They were in prison for seditious conspiracy and other related charges and had received sentences as long as 105 years! That was not OK. I didn't need to know the details just then. I just imagined my people sitting in prison cells for years and years with very little human warmth in their lives and that I needed to do something to change that. They were my people and I could not turn away. I immediately wrote every single one of them and got involved in the amnesty campaign to free these men and women. I had no idea that it was going to be the most meaningful, rewarding thing I'd ever done in my life.



Alejandrina Torres at Danbury FCI

During these years I had several memorable experiences. I became friends with Adolfo Matos, Carmen Valentín, Antonio Camacho, Ricardo Jiménez, Oscar López, and Alberto Rodríguez. Adolfo was the first one I visited, actually the first one who reached out in friendship and told me what some of their needs were, such as visits and money for the phone and commissary. He was the one who clinched it and drew me in tight. I did start visiting Carinen and it was "love at first sight" for the both of us. We became fast friends instantly. I visited Antonio and Alberto in Pennsylvania and I visited Oscar when he was less than 1 month out of isolation, 12 years in a control unit. As I got to know them their release became even more important. I knew they were people of character and principles. Besides that, I loved my friends.

Last week, September 10th, they finally were released under parole conditions. It was hard times leading up to it since the conditions were so strict and criminalized the movement, in their eyes. But to all of Puerto Rico, to their friends and their family, they are heroes. They understood how much it meant to their loved ones and supporters that they come home and most of them agreed to the terms of parole. It was touch and

THE DAY BEFORE MY 14TH BIRTHDAY

by Max Forman-Mullin:

I've been visiting Lucy Rodriguez in the Dublin Women's Prison since I was four years old. The Puerto Rican prisoners have been in prison longer than I've been alive. I visited Lucy and Alicia the night before their release; all four Puerto Rican women and Marilyn Buck were in the visiting room. Not knowing exactly when they were going to be released, I thought this was my last chance to say goodbye. When we got home later that night, I found out that the prisoners would probably be getting out the next day and I was offered the chance to ride with them upon their release. I felt really glad that I was going to be able to see them again, and I wanted to be able to support them after their 19 years in prison.

Friday morning we were all very anxious. We met at the prison at about eight and waited until after one o'clock. They wouldn't tell us when the prisoners were getting out. It was hot and we were tired and hungry. We could see other prisoners out on the lawn; we waved to them and then the guards made them leave.

Cont'd on page 4 OOT



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OUT OF TIME



Silvia arrives in Rome

SILVIA'S STATEMENT

On Tuesday, August 24, 1999, after a brief court appearance I will board an Italian military plane and go back home fulfilling the objective that we have been pursuing for over ten years. This victory has been accomplished with the help and support of thousands of individuals who have backed the campaign without giving up; the various committees on both sides of the Atlantic greased the wheels, did the dirty work, and coordinated the various initiatives that pressured both governments to find a solution; my lawyers, Elizabeth Fink and Grazia Volo, negotiated brilliantly and never backed down in the face of obstinacy; and finally my family who has stood by me from the beginning, in particular my sister Marina who would have cheered the loudest at this outcome. To all I say thank you. Your solidarity kept me focused on our collective goal and encouraged me during my lowest moments.

On Tuesday, I will tell the residing magistrate that I accept the conditions imposed by the American government. They include staying in prison until March of 2008, being exempted from the furlough and work release programs available to Italian prisoners, and being incarcerated under similar conditions I experienced for seventeen years in the United States. Given these stringent limitations, why did I accept?

My primary goal has always been to reunite with my Mother. Now I will be held at Rebibbia, a prison forty-five minutes from her home. We will see each other weekly instead of once a year. I also wanted to make the move to Italy. Even as a prisoner, it represents a step toward the future and my life after prison. It's definitely time to move on.

My departure arrives at an interesting moment in the struggle to free political prisoners. Laura Whitehorn is free since August 6th, and Clinton recently offered a reduction of sentence to eleven of the Puerto Rican comrades. The obvious problems aside, this move by the White House represents a victory for all of those who have believed that the freedom of political prisoners will only be accomplished through vigorous mass political campaign.

While some individuals are being released, many remain incarcerated without any support or recognition. They have no release date and continue to be targeted by the 90s version of COINTELPRO. They deserve the same level of support you so generously extended to me. For reasons of history, I want to mention specifically: Susan Rosenberg, Sekou Odinga, Ray Levasseur, Tommy Manning, Marilyn Buck, Mutulu Shakur, David Gilbert, Albert "Nuh" Washington and Sundiata Acoli.

I have asked the committee to continue the web site. I hope to send periodic communications from Ribibbia (the prison in Rome). I have asked that the web site also be used to publicize the struggle to free other political prisoners.

In closing I want to remind everyone that Mumia Abu Jamal is fighting his most important battle to date for survival. We must all continue to mobilize to stop his execution. If nothing else, our joint battle to win my repatriation underscores that history comes to those who persevere, stick to clear objectives and take the high road.

Peace, Silvia

- OOPS!!! The envelopes for Commissary donation that were sent out with the June issue of Out of Time had the wrong address on them. If you sent us a check and did not receive a thank you, we did not receive your money. We're very sorry and please try again: Commissary Fund, 3543 18th Street, #30, San Francisco, CA 94110.

ANOTHER ATTICA DENIAL

In Aug 1971, govenor nelson rockefeller authorized russell oswald, the corrections commissioner ,to retake the prison that sits in Buffalo, N.Y. 42 prisoners and hostages were murdered when state troopers and the national guard retook D yard after a prison takeover that began because of the denial of basic human rights and inhumanities. After the shooting stopped, state officials grossly distorted reality. It has been described as "a bloody massacre" and a "willful police riot" and a "turkey shoot". For many of us Attica simply means the wholesale death at the hands of the state. It was and has continued to be a political issue where the state of new york refuses to accept responsibility for its "brutal acts of retaliation" as well as the murders committed. In early Aug'99 the us court of appeals for the 2nd circuit ordered yet another new trial for the only public official found liable for the crimes inflicted by the storm troopers.

For years, the question has not been what happened at Attica (the facts are indisputable) but who would be held accountable. Governors and attorney generals came and went; all unwilling to settle civil lawsuits brought by the prisoners 25 years ago. The courts did little to speed things along. To say that it crawled at a snail's pace would be an insult to snails.

Finally in 1992, a federal jury in Buffalo found the deputy warden liable for having been the over-seer of the cruelties committed as reprisals against the prisoners. Five years later, another jury followed up with a damages award of \$4 million to Frank 'Big Black' Smith. By previous agreement, the money was to be paid by the state. With an award that large, 'Black' said they were saying, "just because you're in prison, they can't beat you down like a dog and get away with it."that remains to be seen as this new denial overturns that award.....

A 3 judge panel of the u.s. kourt of appeals for the 2nd circuit sez the trial judge's instructions to the jury were "enigmatic" and improper and thus sends the case once again back to the lower kourts. In other words, back to square one to start all over! what bullshit!! So, the questions remains.....will Attica ever be put to rest ???

Perhaps.....the appellate judges made it clear that they, too, were fed up with the endless delays of officials who "have done all they could" to leave this old wound untreated.....the pus continues to ooze..... Stripped of legal niceties, their message to the kourts and to the state was the same as 'Black's'"Enough already ! I'd like to finally see a settlement. I'm sick and tired of this legal mumbo jumbo." Aren't we all ????



Supporters of Silvia Greet Her at Rebibbia Prison in Rome, August 24th.

OUT OF TIME

To Laura

Individually and collectively, the members of Out Of Control, Lesbian Committee to Support Women Political Prisoners, can hardly express to you Laura Whitehorn, our joy at retiring "22432-037"

Out Of Control formed in 1986 to work with others in shutting down the Lexington, Kentucky high security, prison unit. With the closure of the Lexington Control Unit, Out of Control's primary work evolved to supporting all the women political prisoners/Prisoners of War and fighting for their release.

Eventually we added "Lesbian" to our name. The change resulted from two emerging goals: (1) To make the liberation of the political prisoners a lesbian/gay issue. (2) To make it clear to the other forces in the movement that lesbians were in the struggle, that lesbians and gays had a rightful place in the struggle (and in the world), that it was a benefit to all liberation movements to have lesbians and gays involved, and to gain allies in the struggle for lesbian and gay liberation.

Laura you have been very special to Out Of Control because your conduct has embodied these goals. You have pressed your identity as a Lesbian in all of your actions as an anti-imperialist, an anti-racist, a revolutionary; laying the ground work for a liberated future in a world we all hope to create. We view this stance as particularly brave taken from your vulnerable position as a prisoner, needing all the support you could get. As a result we know you confronted and resisted homophobia.

Laura you have proved yourself a hero to OOC, time and again. We wish to applaud you for the very actions that

resulted in your incarceration. It's also so clear that imprisonment never dampened your revolutionary spirit. You persevered in refusing to let prison walls keep you from being a part of our movement: producing art, writing articles and statements, giving interviews, never saying no to our demands. (More often than not, as you will no doubt attest, on too short notice.) There have been times when we felt we weren't doing enough, like we could never do enough. You were always there with your enthusiasm, your unconditional love. At our tenth anniversary celebration you wrote us a love poem, "Ode to OOC." When we were re-evaluating OOC's work last year you sent a long letter reaffirming our contribution to the movement. It's so easy to feel hopeless and overwhelmed through all the backlash, but even locked away, you never wavered in your enthusiasm. If you could continue the struggle from inside, how could we not!

Laura we think you got guts and a lot of heart. OOC will tell anybody that Laura Whitehorn puts her life where her revolutionary line is. Finally and most importantly, good or bad, you can come up with a joke for any occasion.

Before closing, OOC wants to give major kudos to your girlfriend, Suzie Day. She's hung in under the most adverse conditions, steadfast in her love and commitment. We wish you and Susie lots of good times together. Our arms are wide open to welcome you back from behind prison walls. When you're ready we hope you'll continue to work with us, exchange with us, give us guidance, take guidance, until every last political prisoner is free



Laura and Karina, Carmen Valentin's Granddaughter

Paaarrty!!!! Laura Whitehorn gets out

Lot's of reasons to celebrate these last few months, not the least of which is the release of our favorite Dyke From Hell..... Laura J. Whitehorn. Laura walked out those doors 8:30 am, August 6, 1999, after doing almost 15 years. There aren't any pictures of her actually walking out of the joint because the cops told us they would trash the cameras. It should be noted that a rainbow appeared moments before Laura - the heavens were happy. She was looking pretty snazzy in black pants, black shirt and a multi-colored vest quilted by none other than our other favorite Dyke From Hell, Linda Evans. A bunch of us were waiting for her - lots of hooting and kisses and hugs. Before turning her back on FCI Dublin, Laura displayed a banner for her sisters still inside. It read "Que Salgan Ya" and had all their names on it. We all stopped to carry on some more and take photos on the road just outside the prison. The party was just beginning. First stop was a Berkeley breakfast for close friends. Laura was so excited she could hardly eat the bagels and lox, but managed. Then off to San Francisco - to the Pacific Ocean. Lots of wet feet and Sand Dollars. The day would not be complete without a stop to pick up some Dim Sum A long held fantasy ... the ocean and shrimp dumplings. Laura had planned to take a nap - but once refreshed with shrimp dumplings, the nap wasn't necessary. Instead a live interview with KPFA, the local Pacifica radio station. Then off to a reception where about 100 fans showed up. Laura and her girlfriend, Suzie Day, slipped away a few hours later. One could only imagine????



Laura and Susie

To OOC

I want to thank Out of Control for all your enthusiasm and generosity when you welcomed me on my release from prison.

You helped make the day a fantastic celebration, not just of my release, but of all the women political prisoners and of what we and you have accomplished together.

Thank you, too, for your wonderful message to the party in New York a week after my release. I especially appreciated your warm mention of Susie Day.

I love you all very much. I miss you.

We've got a good start. Free ALL political prisoners.

Venceremos,
Laura Whitehorn

Who is the real terrorist?
During the three weeks while the Puerto Rican POWs were deciding whether or not to accept Clinton's offer of clemency, the US government carried out an average of 40 attacks a day against Iraq.

LINDA TO LAURA

It's hard to believe you're really gone from us, Laura. For years now, my day has seemed empty, missing something intangible, if I didn't see you. We've nurtured our comradeship for more than three decades, felt our friendship grow and flower — and now I miss you so.

Who else will drag me outside to look at some nondescript speck of fuzz in the sky, swearing it's a comet? Who else will convince me to stand for an hour in five lines at the kitchen, only to end up with a plate of limp lettuce inedibly drowned in dressing? (Yet I leave convinced it was all worthwhile just because of your company.)

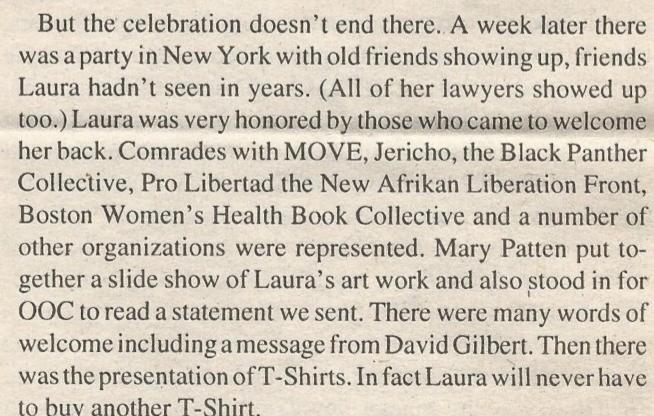
Who else will keep on cracking terrible jokes until finally I have to laugh, if just at your persistence? Who else will supply doggerel, rhyming lyrics and bad puns for birthday presents? and who else will interrupt day conversation just so you can rave on about the Knicks? Who else will think of helping me bathe with my broken arm —and supply the rubber ducky.

Where can I go now for hugs as strong as my own? Who else will truly understand the depth of my rage, my frustration, my sorrow — and the source of my tears? Who else will watch wildlife with me on the track at dusk, and show me how to find silence by walking on the grass?

Will our owls call for others in their flight? Who else still believes we can change the world? And who is courageous enough to keep trying, against all odds.

Oh Lorelei, you're so special to me, and our friendship so precious. A revolutionary & a communist, still and always — not only ideology, but in your life. Witness it in bones deep hatred for our enemy, and your heartfelt love for the crazy & oppressed people we live with. Witness it in your efforts to build unity amongst us, & to encourage the best in everyone. Witness it in your revolutionary and cockeyed optimism.

I strive to emulate you, my sister. My dearest comrade in arms, I love you always. You live in my heart. Momentarily sad as I may be, your freedom brings me the greatest joy — live it up! Venceremos, Linda Evans



OUT OF TIME

the day before... cont'd from page 1 OOT

Finally, they were going to be released! We were escorted to the back gate, watched a door open and saw Carmen, Dylcia, Lucy and Alicia walk down a path. It was amazing. We all jumped out of our cars, Puerto Rican flags in hand, waving and cheering. For a moment, we talked together, hugged and kissed them and then quickly re-entered the cars.

It was really hard to believe it was happening and amazing to see them out of prison. The experience is difficult to put into words. We were all ecstatic. Alicia was crying out of happiness, but Lucy appeared calm. We talked about normal stuff, like how Lucy would get into computers now that she was out. She told me she was glad I was there. We didn't talk too much about prison. It was as if Lucy had already left it behind.

The airport was all a rush of media and goodbyes. They only had a couple minutes to board the plane. Then it was all over and they were on their way to Puerto Rico to be welcomed once again.

That was the day before my 14th birthday and I'll never forget it.

VICTORIES CAUSED BY THE PEOPLE

by Sonja Sivesind, PARC Coordinator

Today Alicia, Dylcia, Carmen, and Lucy were all released. Nineteen years they were locked up. I was crying. Tony talked to me about the trees with their outstretched branches being our connection between heaven and earth. I played charades with the kids as we waited for hours in the hot sun. A three year old chanted "Puerto Rico!" over and over, to enthusiastic bigger people who responded "ye-ah" each time. No one left to get water or food because it was always just around the corner that all four women were going to be released, and we were all so excited for that moment! The cell phones kept ringing, "they are being processed," "they are at the back gate," were the relayed messages, but inevitably they waited and we waited, hours being added on to the nearly twenty long years that family and loved ones have been waiting to be reunited.

When the women were released, tears were streaming as we waved excitedly to Lucy and Alicia who headed directly to the airport to catch their flight. The disappointment of not getting to embrace or hear them was quelled when Carmen and then Dylcia stopped to greet us. Seeing Dylcia and Carmen in white clothes and sandals instead of the prison regulated tan uniforms was wonderful. They were surrounded by friends and family, people who have been visiting them for 19 years, people who have never all been in one space together. A circle was formed around Carmen and then Dylcia, embracing them with love and admiration, while also serving to safely protect them from the media. The women spoke, in Spanish and English, sharing their love for Puerto Rico, Puerto Ricans, their supporters, and the independence movement. Quickly the women were escorted back to the cars for a few hours of celebrating before flying home to Puerto Rico. As the supporters were left to pull together their emotions, I watched a 12 year old embrace a former political prisoner like she was his own mom, with love, affection, and care so sincere I could feel it. As a young woman, new to this work, as compared to those who have been struggling for this victory for two decades, I feel blessed to have lived through the past month when Silvia was returned to Italy, Laura was released, and 11 Puerto Ricans were granted conditional release. There is much work to be done, and these victories caused by the people, are fuel to our fiery inspiration that continues to grow.

I always knew... cont'd from page 1 OOT

go at times. The Bureau of Prisons didn't make it any easier for them or for us, those that picked them up and gave them the hero's welcome they deserved, by not telling us when they'd be released, what flights they'd be on, nothing to make things go smoothly. But after all was said and done, all were picked up by friends and family, were accompanied to their homes, 9 in Puerto Rico, 2 in Chicago, and all faced incredible receptions full of love that they so deserve.

For me it was hard. I promised I wouldn't cry. But as I saw the compañeras walk out all at once, I ran to my dear friend, Carmen. I couldn't help it! I screamed in her ear, over and over again, jumped up and down. I couldn't control my emotions. They were finally free, the day that we've worked so hard for: marches, petitions, letters, rallies, forums, teach-ins, acts of civil disobedience, on and on and on. Some people worked on this for almost 20 years from the day they were arrested. It was a long, long battle, full of ups and down, politically and emotionally. But the long and short of it is, this stuff really works. Stay involved.

Towards freedom for all political prisoners!

On September 10th, 11 Puerto Rican political prisoners were released after serving close to twenty years at US federal prisons when Clinton agreed to their petition for clemency. His decision acknowledged the harsh and excessively lengthy sentences these Puerto Rican patriots had received at the hands of the US justice system for acts that harmed no one. The 11 (and others not released) never participated in their trials and refused to acknowledge US government jurisdiction in their case based on international law guaranteeing Puerto Ricans the right to wage anti-colonial struggle. They were jointly charged and sentenced to terms ranging from 50 to 90 years for "seditious conspiracy" (basically, treason).

Their release is a tremendous victory, and has united all sectors of Puerto Rican society, regardless of political persuasion. They are the Nelson Mandelas of their country. They have the support of human rights advocates around the world, from Desmond Tutu to Jimmy Carter. They emerged joyfully from prison with their commitment to participate in Puerto Rico's anti-colonial process intact and a vigorous will to win the release of their comrades left behind bars and all political prisoners. This historical moment is one to celebrate, a time to rejoice and feel encouraged in our work for the release of all political prisoners!

All but two of the released Puerto Ricans have decided to settle in Puerto Rico, based in part on the repressive US media, police and legislative campaign against their release. They are already meeting with community groups and plan to visit Vieques, site of a heated grass-roots campaign to oust the US Navy along with its bombing and target ranges. People in Puerto Rico are organizing to support the prisoners, and to monitor and expose any injustices against them by US agencies.

We can help by sending money. We have a goal to raise \$100 each from as many progressive folk as possible. It takes money to reunite children, spouses, parents who are now traveling from all over the US to rejoin their loved ones. It takes money to acquire the basic necessities to start productive lives...to pay for clothing and personal items, security deposits and rent, transportation to work and community functions. It takes money to undo twenty years of confinement; for some, under the harshest prison conditions the US has to offer. These are people many of whom were isolated, psychologically and physically harassed. These are people who received health and dental care for the past twenty years from the US Bureau of Prisons! These are people who haven't had a visitor, seen a movie or read a book not approved by the US Bureau of Prisons in twenty years! If you can't afford \$100, give what you can. Checks can be made out to fireworx earmarked for the Puerto Rican (ex!) prisoners. Mail to OOC, 3543 18th St., Box 30, SF, CA 94110.

HEART OF THE STRUGGLE

by Michelle Foy

My name is Michelle, and I am a twenty-six years old white woman. I have been involved in anti-prison work for 5 years or so. On September 10, I was fortunate to be one of over 150 people to greet Dylcia, Carmen, Alicia and Lucy outside the gates of the federal prison at Dublin.

When I lived in Colorado I was active with a group that fought control unit prisons and supported political prisoners. I visited Oscar López Rivera in the infamous ADX Florence control unit for a short time before he was transferred to the equally repressive control unit at Marion. Getting to know Oscar, meant getting to know the struggle for Puerto Rican independence and self determination in a way that I never could have gotten from books. The heart of the struggle is the passion and love for Puerto Rico that Oscar and all the Independistas show.

That day outside the gates of the FCI, during the six hours of waiting for the women's arrival, I was able to talk to many people. Kids who have known the women for as long as they have been alive. Elders who organized both in the streets and in the prisons with Alicia, Lucy, Carmen and Dylcia. Many who just months before did not believe they would see the day that the women would walk through those gates to return to their homeland.

The hugeness of that day hit me suddenly, and I realized that all of us there in front of the prison, and many thousands, millions more were making history. That it is the people who make history, despite the lie that we are told that only the rich and the powerful make history.



EVENTS CALENDAR

Thursday, Oct. 7, 6-9pm, PARC. Bulk Mailing party for benefit to raise awareness about Lori Berenson, political prisoner in Peru. Call 510-893-4648.

Saturday, Oct. 9, 9:30-2:30, PARC . Anti-Racism Workshop with People's Institute West. Call PARC to register. 510-893-4648.

Sunday, October 24, 3:30-5:30 pm, La Pena Cultural Center. Reception and fundraiser for Cuban filmmaker Gloria Rolando, creator of Eyes of the Rainbow. Sponsored by the Jericho Amnesty Movement 415-648-8059 or 510-667-9293.

Saturday, November 13: SAVE THE DATE: DEMONSTRATE IN FRONT OF THE WOMEN'S PRISONS in CHOWCHILLA. UNSHACKLE WOMEN'S HEALTH CARE! Info: California Coalition for Women Prisoners 415-255-7036 ext. 4. X-Priority: 3.

Tuesday, Nov. 16, 6pm, La Pena Cultural Center, benefit for PARC, CISPES, and Lori Berenson's campaign. Music, food, and fun! 510-893-4648.

Monday, Oct. 11, 6pm, PARC , General Meeting. Presentation "Right wing origins of the current prison crisis".

Saturday, Oct. 23, 5pm-late. PARC Haunted House and Carnival: 673 65th St. Kids of all ages: games, music, haunted house and entertainment! (see phone above)

Saturday, November 6th, Annual Pow Wow at the women's federal corrections institution in Dublin, sponsored by the Four Winds Culture Group. Call PARC for attendance forms.(see phone above)

Stay tuned for the next issue of OOT for info about Native Prisoners Leonard Peltier and Eddie Hatcher

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